



## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 6 – 12 Jun 2011



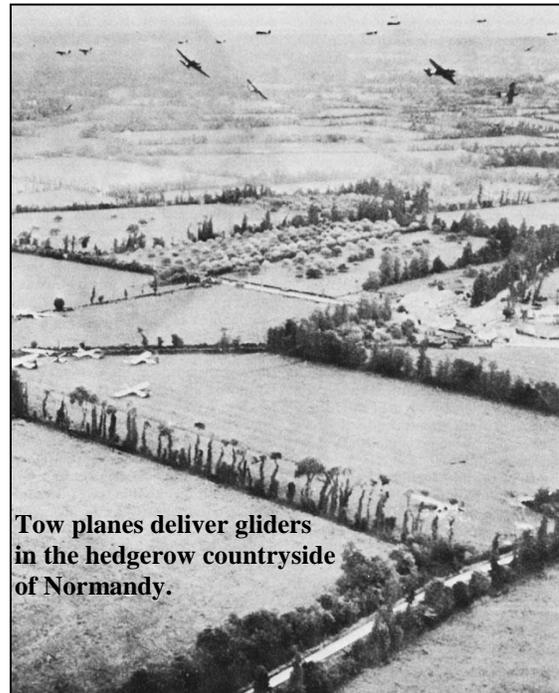
**U.S. AIR FORCE**

10 Jun 1943 The RAF and the USAAF launched the **Combined Bomber Offensive** against Germany. Eighth Air Force struck industrial targets by day and the RAF attacked cities by night. The objective was to destroy the Germans' ability and will to continue the war. Three days later, in a raid on Kiel, Germany, Eighth Air Force lost 26 of 60 bombers, demonstrating the need for fighter escorts. A similar bombing campaign in the Pacific was not possible until late summer, 1944, when U.S. forces captured the Marianas Islands and built air bases within range of Japan.

11 Jun 1943 After a month-long aerial bombardment that had commenced on May 8, some 11,000 Italian troops on the island of Pantelleria, between Italy and Tunisia, surrendered to the Allies without firing a shot. It was the **first large defended area to fall to air power**, and cleared the way for the Allies to move north from Africa to invade Sicily and Italy.

6 Jun 1944 **D-DAY**. Operation OVERLORD, the Allied invasion of northwest Europe, began. Ninth Air Force conducted a tactical air offensive from 1 May to 6 June, flying more than 35,000 sorties in preparation for the amphibious and airborne assaults. Ninth Air Force struck enemy airfields, coastal gun positions, rail and road systems, bridges and communications from the Netherlands to the Pyrenees. The Allied air attacks prevented any effective Luftwaffe response to the invasion and cut transportation arteries, isolating the beachheads from German forces.

On D-Day and the night before, Eighth and Ninth Air Forces and the RAF supported the invasion with 15,000 interdiction, close air support, and airlift sorties. More than 1,400 C-47s, C-53s, and gliders of Ninth Troop Carrier Command delivered three full airborne divisions (13,000 men) and artillery on the night before and during the Allied amphibious invasion of Normandy. The airborne troops' mission was to secure the land approaches to and from the beaches.



Tow planes deliver gliders in the hedgerow countryside of Normandy.

C-47s towing gliders to landing zones near Ste. Mère-Eglise.



11 Jun 1948 **The USAF revised its aircraft designation system.** "P" for pursuit changed to "F" for fighter. Thus, the P-51 became the F-51; the P-80 became the F-80, etc.



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8 Jun 1953 The **USAF Thunderbirds performed for the first time** at Luke AFB, Arizona. The team was named partly for the legendary Thunderbird of Native American folklore – an awesome creature that shook the earth with the thunder of its great wings.

The first Thunderbird team of pilots and support personnel was carefully selected from officer and enlisted ranks. The first Thunderbird aircraft was the F-84G Thunderjet (photo at right).



11 Jun 1957 The **first U-2** high-altitude, long-range reconnaissance aircraft was delivered to the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. The U-2 could fly 10-hour missions at exceptionally high altitudes. Photo at left.

6 Jun 1960 **Electronic Flight Planning.** An operational development of major importance was successfully tested when two F-100s took off from Itazuke Air Base, Japan on what was **PACAF's first computer-planned mission.** The computer-produced frag orders were more detailed and accurate and could be produced in a few seconds. The time and money saving features of the new system were obvious, but most important was the quick reaction to changes in combat profiles, a factor which was to prove a vital ingredient of combat missions to come.

9 Jun 1964 **First KC-135 Support for Vietnam Combat Operations.** Four KC-135s from Clark AB, Philippines, refueled eight F-100s from Da Nang on an attack against anti-aircraft batteries in northern Laos. PACAF RF-101Cs and KB-50Js supported the strike.



10 Jun 1969 **Project Misty Bronco.** Beginning in April, Misty Bronco tested the effectiveness of armed OV-10s providing an immediate USAF strike presence readily available to ground forces. The concept was deemed successful, and arming of all OV-10s was authorized on 10 June. (OV-10 at left).

7-24 Jun 1976 **First TEAM SPIRIT Exercise.** Team Spirit was a joint and combined field training exercise designed to evaluate and improve the interoperability of the ROK and U.S. forces. One of the specific objectives of this first Team Spirit was to test and evaluate the Korea Tactical Air Control System. A total of 608 U.S. and ROK aircraft flew 2,418 sorties.



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**U.S. AIR FORCE**

8 Jun – 2 Jul 1991 The **eruption of Mount Pinatubo** in the Philippines buried Clark Air Base and two other U.S. military installations with volcanic ash, forcing the Air Force to evacuate some 15,000 people to Guam and the United States. **FIERY VIGIL** became the largest evacuation operation since the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Clark Air Base, the oldest and largest USAF overseas base, closed permanently. The photos below show the eruption (left) and a part of Clark Air Base some weeks after the ash fall (right).



6 Jun 1996 At NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, the first USAF aircrew graduated from the Navy's EA-6B Fleet Replacement Squadron to join one of five new **Navy/Air Force EA-6B "Prowler" squadrons**. The joint venture consolidated the airborne threat radar jamming mission and led to the retirement of the EF-111 Raven.



11 Jun 1996 **JSTARS**. ACC acquired its first E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft. The E-8, capable of providing detailed information on ground targets, had been tested during Operations DESERT STORM and JOINT ENDEAVOR.

10 Jun 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE**. Yugoslavia agreed to the replacement of Serb forces in Kosovo by multinational peacekeepers as well as the return of ethnic Albanians.

Early in this air campaign, political restrictions on targets, meager air forces and poor weather led to disappointing results and continued Serb intransigence. Noted military historian John Keegan, a long-time critic of airpower, said that "airpower simply does not seem to be working."



After a 23 April summit, NATO employed a more robust air component. The target set was expanded to include more Serb military forces as well as military-industrial plants, lines of communication, petroleum resources, electrical grids, and C2 facilities. USAF combat forces developed effective flex tactics for striking Serb forces as soon as they were located by reconnaissance assets. When Serbia capitulated to NATO terms, Keegan stated that **ALLIED FORCE** was the first war in history won by air power alone.